

State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Testimony of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women Before the Select Committee on Housing Tuesday, February 15, 2005

In Support of:

SB 989, AAC The Preservation of Federally Assisted Housing as Low and Moderate Income Housing
HB 5145 AAC Affordable Housing Developments
HB 5963, AAC Affordable Housing Dwelling Units

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women thanks the committee for this opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the above-referenced proposals that would assist low-income individuals in obtaining and keeping affordable housing.

The PCSW has focused its attention on the need for safe and affordable housing for women and their children because it is a problem that underlies many others: For example, without access to affordable housing, single mothers are unable to obtain economic self-sufficiency -even when they are working-and women who are victims of domestic violence are unable to leave their unsafe homes because there is no place to which they can go. When housing costs are disproportionately high, residents often have to sacrifice other needs to pay their rent.

Thirty-three percent of Connecticut's population rent rather than own, and in the cities the number drastically increase.¹ For example, 75% of Hartford residents, 70% of

¹ Priscilla Canny, Ph.D. and Douglas Hall, Ph.D. *Housing: Home Ownership in Connecticut*, CT Voices for Children Census Connections, Vol. 1, Issue 2, September 2003.

New Haven residents, 57% of New Britain and Bridgeport residents, and 52% of Waterbury resident are not homeowners.²

Connecticut has been ranked the sixth most expensive state for renters in the country.³ A person needs to earn \$18 an hour, more than two and half times the state's minimum wage of \$7.10, to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment in Connecticut.⁴ This means that, on average, a person earning minimum wage would have to work 104 hours a week – two and a half full-time jobs- to afford a two-bedroom apartment. In cities, the problem is even more severe. For example, in the Stamford-Norwalk area, the third costliest rental market in the entire nation, a person must earn \$28.71 an hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment.⁵ Fifty percent of the state's renters cannot afford the high rental costs without spending more than 30% of their household income on rent.⁶

High rental costs is one factor contributing to the increase of homelessness, which is fast becoming a women's issue as families – not just individual adults – are now seeking shelter. In FFY 2003, 1,406 families sought shelter.⁷ Of those families, single females headed 85.9% and 10.6% were two-parent families.⁸ Eleven thousand and sixty-six (11,066) single adults sought shelter.⁹ Of that population, 24.3% were women.¹⁰ In the past year, there has been a decline in all categories mentioned above, except single females, which has increased by 5.9%.¹¹

| Shelter Services | FFY 2002 | FFY 2003 | Numbers (+/-) | Percentage (+/-) |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Families | 1,506 | 1,406 | -100 | -6.6% |
| Single Female | 1,259 | 1,206 | -53 | -4.2% |
| Single Male | 74 | 48 | -26 | -35.1% |
| Two Parents | 168 | 149 | -19 | -11.3% |
| Single Adults | 11,251 | 11,066 | -185 | -1.6% |
| Female | 2,545 | 2,694 | +149 | +5.9% |
| Male | 8,705 | 8,369 | -336 | -3.9% |

In light of our current housing situation, investments in affordable housing must remain a top priority. The proposed bills outline several strategies to support affordable housing for the vast majority of Connecticut residents – often women –by ensuring that housing authorities, municipalities, and the state maintain their commitments to affordable housing.

² Ibid.

³ *Out of Reach*, National Low Income Housing Coalition, September 2003 available at www.nlihc.org.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *Homeless Shelter Report Annual Demographic for Federal Fiscal Year 2003*. CT Department of Social Services via CT Coalition to End Homelessness, available at www.cceh.org/facts.htm.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Comparison of reports *Annual Homeless Shelter Demographic Report, FFY 2002 (Oct. 2001-Sept. 2002)* *Family Composition* versus *Homeless Shelter Report Annual Demographic for Federal Fiscal Year 2003*. CT Department of Social Services via CT Coalition to End Homelessness

